

Efforts Under Way to Perpetuate Bug Light Maintenance

Efforts are under way to create an endowment of \$100,000 to preserve the restoration work done on Bug Light over the last 12 years.

Members of the volunteers, non-profit Project Bug Light are seeking donations for this endowment, which will provide a continuing income to insure the preservation of Bug Light for future generations.



BUG LIGHT

Known locally as Bug Light, Duxbury Pier Light, marks the shoal water off Saquish Head at the entrance of Plymouth, Kingston, and Duxbury bays. The light was the first, and is one of the last remaining, of 65 iron-clad "spark plug" designs built in the United States in 1871. The last lighthouse-keeper ended his tour of duty in 1964 when the structure became fully automated.

The light stands 35 feet above high water, has 3 internal floors plus the top lantern room. The light beam comes from a 4th order Fresnel lens. Now the light and horn are maintained by the USCG Aids to Navigation Team, Boston Group. Both are solar-powered by ten 12-volt batteries using 4-35 WT solar panels. During poor visibility, the FA-232 horn sounds every 15 seconds and the 250 mm. red lantern flashes (2) red every 5 seconds with a nominal range of 6 nautical miles.

In 1871 William Burgess of Plymouth contracted with the federal government to build Bug Light because of the heavy commercial traffic to and from the area. It was of "caisson" construction using 10-foot-long iron plates, 28 feet in diameter at the bottom. Bug was airfilled with a cotterdam, and towed into position by the Schooner Schr & Sloop Rosewood; then sunk and approximately one-third of the base filled with concrete. The catwalk and roof were added later, primarily used for weather protection of the keeper and to collect rainwater.

Another important mission for lighthouses was rescue. Keeper Fred Bohm's outstanding record in one year in the early 1930s showed rescues of 90 persons, including 36 girl scouts.

During the 1970s Bug Light was in dire need of major restoration because of years of neglected maintenance. In the early 1980s, with a refurbishing cost estimated at \$400,000, the United States Coast Guard planned to replace the top half of Bug Light with a narrow cylindrical pole like they did to the Deer Island Light in Boston Harbor. This prompted the organization of a volunteer group, Project Bug Light Inc. in 1983. Its sole mission was and is the restoration and preservation of this unique historic monument to our nautical past. A lease was negotiated with the U. S. Coast Guard and subsequently renewed in 1993.

During the past 12 years extensive repairs have been undertaken by both Project Bug Light Inc., and the Coast Guard. In 1984 Project Bug Light Inc., sponsored the complete rebuilding of the catwalk and roof. The work was done by David Sylvia of Plymouth. In 1994, the Coast Guard gave Bug Light a new East ladder and 2 new galvanized decks inside.

This past year Project Bug Light organized 16 work days out on Bug, including 29 volunteers who contributed 277 man/woman-hours of cleaning, scraping, sanding, and painting to our restoration project.

Currently, Bug Light is in fine structural shape, but will require continual yearly upkeep. An endowment of \$100,000 will make this possible. Donations are tax-deductible and can be sent to Project Bug Light Inc., P.O.Box 2167, Duxbury, MA 02331. For more information, call 934-2656.